(a) whether Britain had framed stricter new immigration rules which came into effect on 1st October, 1994;

(b) whether visitors from the Indian subcontinent have particularly been adversely affected by them;

(c) if so, whether Government have taken any initiative to persuade the British Government to suitably modify their immigration rules so that the interests of the Indian immigrants are not harmed in any way; if so, the outcome thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Government are aware of a document entitled "Statement of changes in Immigration Rules" issued by the British Home Office which consolidates regulations relating to "control before entry" and "control after entry" and came into effect from 1 October, 1994. The only significant changes in British Immigration Rules flow from the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Legislation passed by the British Parliament which came into effect from 26 July, 1993. Under this Legislation, the right of appeal against refusal of visa for short term visitors (upto six months) and prospective students and their dependants was withdrawn. The right of appeal for long term visitors and those applying to settle in the UK remains in force. The Legislation also provides for speedier disposal of Asylum cases to be able to identify unfounded applications and fraudulent cases.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Our concerns regarding these new regulations were projected at various levels to the British authorities in 1992 and 1993. Government have been assured that the UK has no desire to restrict the number of visitors or students entering that country and that the provisions of the new regulations will have no effect on the grant of visas to bonafide short term visitors and students from India to the UK. The British authorities have introduced procedures to maintain and reinforce the fairness of the decision making process at their diplomatic missions.

Nuclear Threat from China

2221. SHRI O. P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China had conducted its 41st nuclear test at Lopnor in Xinjiang in October, 1994;

(b) whether China intends to refine and modernise its arsenal inspite of the nuclear test moratorium observed by the other four nuclear weapon powers;

(c) whether China has more than 300 nuclear weapons of which only 28 can reach the U.S. and the rest can only pose a threat to countries in China's neighbourhood: and

(d) if so, the measures taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to update its nuclear technology to counter any probable nuclear threat from any country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): Yes, Sir.

(b) Reports from China and elsewhere indicate that China is engaged in modernising its nuclear arsenal;

(c) Government cannot confirm the exact number of nuclear weapons that China posseses;

(d) Government keep under constant review all developments which have a bearing on the country's security and take the appropriate measures required.

Bangladeshi Organisations send Terrorists to Kashmir

2222. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the activities of some organisations in Bangladesh which propose to send nearly 3,000 persons as terrorists to Kashmir;

(b) whether Government have taken up the matter with Government of Bangladesh; if so, the outcome thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (c) Government have seen press reports to this effect and continue to remain vigilant in the matter.

Time limit for Issuance of Passports

2223. SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether passports to Indian Nationals are issued within some specified time limit in such cases where Character Verification Certificates issued by authorised officials of State and Central Government;

(b) if so, details thereof;

(c) whether such requests are subjected to any Police Verification;

(d) if so, details thereof with reasons for doubting the integrity of officials of Government despite being authorised;